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The Jewish Quarterly Review.

OCTOBER, 1888.

INTRODUCTORY.

“Good wine needs no bush,” and a new magazine should require no editorial preliminaries. But since the present venture has had no real predecessor in England, and is not intended to conform precisely to the model of any continental contemporary, a few words of explanation may not be altogether out of place. We cannot attempt to float our new magazine after the fashion of the school-book preface; it would, unfortunately, not be accurate to say that we are about to satisfy an obvious and long-felt want. For that is scarcely a want which is not realized as such; and, though there be no English magazine devoted to the interests of Jewish Literature and Theology, History and Religion, the Jewish Community of England seems, as a whole, to be perfectly satisfied with its absence. Our new quarterly does not, therefore, start with flying colours, and with every anticipation of a brilliant and long-lasting success; it starts tentatively, and not without some misgivings. For it must attempt to create the want which it must also seek to satisfy. It remains to be seen whether the double effort will, or will not, be beyond its strength.

That Judaism in England has but a feeble interest in scholarly investigations of its history and literature, is abundantly clear. That, either from indolence or timidity, it cares little for the philosophic discussion and development of its theology and religion is also evident.

The present Editors are agreed that this lack of interest and care is both discreditable and dangerous. They hope

that the providing of a medium in which scholars may register the results of their research, and theologians the results of their thoughts, may stimulate the few to work, think, and write, and the many to read. At present there exists no medium through which specifically Jewish research and thought can find expression. It is, therefore, not altogether surprising that neither flourishes.

One prominent portion of our new quarterly, then, will be devoted to the past—to the better knowledge of Jewish history, literature, and theology in bygone days. And here, while the fare we offer will, we hope, be attractive and valuable to the pure scholar, it will also mostly be presented—at least that is the editorial desire—in such a form as to prove interesting as well as novel to the “general reader.” These two objects are not by any means necessarily inconsistent. We may, indeed, despair of ever being able to put before our readers such work as that of the great Jewish scholar, Bernays, in which the desired combination has reached, perhaps, an almost unexampled level of perfection. But we hope that our very first number, which contains contributions from some of our ablest Jewish writers, may, in this respect, merit approval.

Our definition of past Jewish literature does not stop short before the Bible, and Biblical exposition and criticism will frequently, it is hoped, find a place in our Review. We cannot here examine the causes. We can only notice the, to us, mournful fact of the neglect which modern Jewish scholarship has shown to that greatest and most vital of all works of Jewish literature, the Bible. If we want instruction on Isaiah, or Job, or Proverbs, it is not from recent Jewish scholars that we can get it. The Hebrew Bible is, indeed, common ground, and the best exegetical criticism of our own day is absolutely without sectarian bias. We owe our grateful thanks to the distinguished Christian scholar who has so materially increased the value of our first number; but we cannot refrain from expressing a hope that our magazine, if it live long enough, may be the means of securing to the subject and the method (both critical and religious!) of Professor Cheyne some Jewish followers and disciples.

While, however, the past will receive its due share of attention, the present, in which we live, and through which the future is determined, must not be neglected. The present and future condition of Jewish religion and theology cannot properly be discussed by those who have not studied their past. Yet rigidly to turn one's eyes away from to-day

and to-morrow and keep them fixed upon the neutral tints of yesterday, may secure, indeed, the doubtful good of temporary tranquillity, but must lead infallibly through stagnation to decay. From time to time, therefore, we hope to receive and print articles which will deal with these grave subjects at once reverently and rationally.

Unlike the few continental Jewish journals in which religious questions have been discussed, our magazine will invite contributions from every section of modern Jewish opinion. The results of original "orthodox" thought, we shall be neither more nor less willing to insert than the results of original "reform" thought. One promise, at least, we may make, in all assurance of its fulfilment,—the promise, that is, of absolute impartiality. The Editors are convinced that the policy of silence and inattention in matters of theology and religion is doomed to failure. Its inevitable issue is ignorance, and ignorance must ultimately bring dissolution in its train. It is not without some sense of responsibility and doubt as to our competence for the task, that the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW has been established. The reasons why its Editors believe, and believe sincerely, in the possibility of its interest and value have now been given. Whether possibility shall be changed into reality, it is for the public, the arbiters of its fate, to decide.
